



Concrete ideas

An unusual building method is finally winning approval. By **Julie Lewis**

Baseline Constructions wanted stage 1 of the Metro Village development at Rosebery to showcase building with precast concrete – its aesthetic appeal, cost-effectiveness and the speed of construction.

Stage 1 consists of two seven storey buildings and one five-storey building housing 111 home units plus retail space. It is all precast concrete except for the slab supporting the apartment blocks.

Baseline employed a smaller workforce than that needed for conventional construction yet completed the building work in just 12 months.

Site project manager Peter Groenewegen says the final product is “better quality than could be expected for the cost structure of this kind of development”.

The company used three different texture coatings in

the construction, moving away from the bland uniformity of finish that has made NSW councils reluctant to approve precast buildings in the past.

Baseline became a convert to precast concrete in 1999 and now specialises in it. This meant a shift in work practices, Groenewegen says. With regular building “you have a slow start and time to grow with the job, whereas with precast all your planning and thinking is upfront”.

As with all its work, Baseline managed stage 1 of Metro Village from start to finish. “We appoint the engineers, we appoint the architects and we tell them what we want,” Groenewegen says.

Work on stage 2, also an almost entirely precast concrete project, is already well under way. As Groenewegen says, “You can do wonderful things with precast concrete.”